

Johns Hopkins University

**DEVELOPMENT OF A WEBSITE RESOURCE TOOLKIT TO SUPPORT THE
ONBOARDING AND CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF RESEARCH
ADMINISTRATORS AT A NOT-FOR-PROFIT FOUNDATION**

by
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Abstract

Research Administrators (RA) play a critical function in the sponsored research environment and need valuable resources to aid in effective execution of their responsibilities. The author of this Capstone Project recognized the RAs at the not-for-profit Foundation of which she is employed, were not fully supported by the resources available to them on the Foundation's website. The Capstone Project addresses this problem through building a web-based research administration toolkit for Foundation RAs. There were three main objectives for the project: 1) distribute a questionnaire to RAs to a) assess the RAs frequency of use of the current Foundation website and understand how helpful RAs find the website and b) obtain feedback from RAs, on topics they identify as essential and beneficial in performing their role; 2) develop an easily accessible resource toolkit on the website for RAs containing content that will support them in their duties and professional growth; and 3) leverage the Foundation website and toolkit as an extension of the OSP to foster better communication with RAs. The Foundation website would serve as a suitable platform for the toolkit as RAs used the current website resources at varying frequencies. The current resources available on the website did need improvements as not all RAs found the website resources helpful. RAs at different levels of experience and years of employment at the Foundation can benefit from the resources in the toolkit as analysis suggested RAs valued similar research administration areas, and tasks and processes as essential to their role. The toolkit provides a user-friendly platform for RAs to access the resources concentrated on the research administration areas, and task and processes they valued as most important.

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Abbreviations

FY	Fiscal Year
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
IHE	Institute of Higher Education
JIT	Just In Time
NIH	National Institutes of Health
OS	Other Support
OSP	Office of Sponsored Projects
PI	Principal Investigator
RA	Research Administrator

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Background.

The research administrator (RA) role is complex, challenging, and an essential component in the realm of sponsored research. Sponsored research is ever evolving, with changes in sponsor policy and regulations, U.S. governing law, research scope, and increasing collaborations worldwide. Research institutions that receive sponsored funds need to recognize how these changes in policy and regulation impact a project's administrative component. It is important for research institutions to be able to adapt to the changes and establish procedures to ensure compliance with the updates to sponsor policy and regulations. Therefore, an institutions' RAs must be equipped with the knowledge, tools, and skills necessary to keep up with the evolution of sponsored research.

Sponsored research is competitive, with multiple research institutions and organizations, both domestically and internationally, applying for research grant funding throughout the year. In the United States, there are twenty-six major grant-making federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS),¹ the largest of the federal agencies.² The National Institutes of Health (NIH), an HHS division, invests substantial funds in medical research, estimated at \$41.7 billion per year. According to the agency website, "more than 80 percent of NIH's funding is awarded for extramural research, largely through almost 50,000 competitive grants to more than 300,000 researchers at more than 2,500 universities, medical schools, and other research institutions in every state."³ In fiscal year (FY) 2019, 54,903

¹ Grants.gov, "Grant-Making Agencies | GRANTS.GOV," accessed March 30, 2021, <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grant-making-agencies.html>.

² Office of Acquisitions and the Office of Grants Division of Grants, "Grants," Text, HHS.gov, December 30, 2014, <https://www.hhs.gov/grants/grants/index.html>.

³ National Institutes of Health, "Budget," National Institutes of Health (NIH), October 31, 2014, <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/budget>.

competing applications were submitted to NIH for research project grants, with NIH only funding 11,035, a 20.1 percent success rate.⁴ The success of the research portfolios of universities, non-profit organizations, and other research conducting institutions is dependent on the knowledge and experience of an RA. The training and learning for RAs need to continue, beyond initial education and employment onboarding. The knowledge of research administration processes, procedures, requirements, and regulations is constantly changing, resulting in the continuous need for training and learning by the RA.

The author of this Capstone Project works for a private, not-for-profit foundation (Foundation) charged with managing the sponsored research programs conducted by the scientists at the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene Institutes. Funding comes from various entities such as federal and state governments, non-profit organizations, and private foundations. The majority of the Foundation's sponsored projects, roughly 75 percent, are funded by the federal government, specifically from the NIH. For the Foundation, it is imperative to stay highly competitive in applying for federally sponsored funds and maintaining compliance with federal regulations. The Foundation's research administrators are vital in making this happen.

1.2. Statement of the Problem.

For this Capstone Project, the author reflected on the daily interactions with RAs at the Foundation, observing gaps in knowledge of internal procedures and policies, and federal sponsor instructions and regulations. Outside of the Foundation's Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP), there exists no central resource for RAs to obtain information to help fill in the gaps. While it provides some helpful resources, the Foundation's website is limited and lacking in

⁴ National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, "Extramural Research Overview for Fiscal Year 2019 | NIH: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases," accessed March 30, 2021, <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/2019-extramural-research-overview>.

scope concerning the daily responsibilities of RAs. The problem this Capstone Project addresses is how best to provide the Foundation's RAs with the information and resources necessary to understand internal and federal sponsor procedures and policies, and how can the functionality of the Foundation website be improved to facilitate a solution. The author proposes the development of a web-based research administration toolkit to serve as an additional central resource for RAs focused on helping RAs in their day-to-day responsibilities.

1.3. Project Questions.

The author, through this Capstone Project, will address the following questions:

1. How can a research administration resource toolkit improve the Foundation website and serve as a helpful resource for RAs?
2. What resources must be included in a toolkit to reinforce the training of RAs and support their professional growth and development?

1.4. Project Objectives.

The author seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Distribute a questionnaire to RAs to:
 - a) Assess the RAs frequency of use of the current Foundation website and understand how helpful RAs find the website.
 - b) Obtain feedback from RAs, on topics they identify as essential and beneficial in performing their role.
2. Develop an easily accessible resource toolkit on the website for RAs containing content that will support them in their duties and professional growth.
3. Leverage the Foundation website and toolkit as an extension of the OSP to foster better communication with RAs.

1.5. Significance.

The toolkit would be a valuable asset for the Foundation's RAs. For new RAs to the Foundation, the toolkit can reinforce initial training received, for more seasoned RAs, a refresher on skills, internal procedures, and other sponsored projects content. Further, as changes in an RAs' responsibilities do occur, such as an RA transitioning from pre-award to post-award duties, the toolkit can help alleviate some of the transition difficulties an RA may encounter.

It is vital for RAs to grow professionally and for the Foundation to invest and support this growth. With access to resources, RAs can feel confident in using internal systems and understanding internal procedures and be versed in their responsibilities as stewards of federal and other extramural funding. The toolkit can also help build a foundation for better communication between research departments and the Foundation's OSP.

1.6 Exclusions and Limitations.

The author will not distribute the questionnaire to Principal Investigators (PIs) at this time. PIs at the Foundation do not typically handle the administrative tasks of a sponsored project over its lifecycle. Personnel of the Foundation's OSP will also be excluded as their responsibilities are to provide operational and administrative support for the Foundation's PIs and RAs, and to ensure compliance with sponsor and institutional requirements. Additionally, the Foundation's OSP provides the resources available to RAs on the website.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of literature review.

The author's literature review for this Capstone Project found no specific articles discussing creating and developing a web-based toolkit. The literature review provided varying articles on the training and onboarding of research administrators. The author divided the literature review into the following areas:

1. Understanding the Complexity of the Research Administration Role
2. Best Practices for Cultivating and Supporting Successful RAs
 - a. Children's Mercy Hospital Case Study
 - b. The University of Michigan Case Study
3. Professional Growth of Research Administrators

2.2 Details of review.

2.2.1. Understanding Complexity of the Research Administration Role.

The literature suggests that understanding the Research Administrator's role and their professional growth and progression and what this entails is a significant component in supporting the RA. The RA's role involves early classifications which ranged from a basic description as a business manager to having responsibilities in human resources processes, maintenance tasks, and laboratory operations.⁵ Over time, an RA's duties and responsibilities have evolved with the changing research environment and migration into today's digital and technologically advanced era.

⁵ Norman Kaplan, "The Role of the Research Administrator," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (1959): 20–42, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2390647>.

Hansen and Moreland explored how research administration can meet the challenge of staying grounded in the founding principles while still adapting to the changing environment. They believed the following circumstances invoked the need for research offices to reevaluate and evolve and included 1) an introduction of stricter federal compliance policies and rules, 2) increased government investment in research, 3) political agendas dictating how and what research gets funded, and 4) cultural divisions and breakdown of the relationship between researcher, administrator, and leadership, becoming common in the university setting.⁶ Research administrators could not effectively "manage for research, facilitate the grants process, collaborate with the faculty, and mediate among the conflicting interests."⁷ The success of future research endeavors depended on research administrators' ability to meet the demands and challenges created by the shifting environments, and on the reorganization and restructuring of offices of research administration.⁸ Schulthess and Wacker examined how the RA position fits into and impacts the "research ecosystem" and describes it as a "jack of all trades."⁹ RAs possess the insight necessary to manage the administrative requirements of sponsored research and prove vital in informing their institutions and researchers of policy updates, legislative mandates, and changes on the institutional level.¹⁰

⁶ Stephen Hansen and Kim Moreland, "The Janus Face of Research Administration," *Research Management Review* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 43-53. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1070349.pdf>

⁷ Ibid., 48.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Nicolas Schulthess and Luca Wacker, "Research Administrator – The Jack of All Trades in the Research Ecosystem: Encomium of Research Administration," *NCURA Magazine* 51, no. 2 (April 2019): 18–19.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Research administration is a demanding field, and stress is inevitable for RAs who have to answer to many stakeholders in sponsored research. Stressors arise no matter what stage of the lifecycle a project is in, and it is essential to acknowledge and understand best practices in order for RAs to manage them. Katsapis conducted a study to determine the types of stressors University Research Administrators (URAs) deal with in their occupation using the Occupational Roles Questionnaire (ORQ) of the Occupational Stress Inventory-Revised (OSI-R); five of the six occupational stress types were analyzed; Role Overload (RO), Role Insufficiency (RI), Role Ambiguity (RA), Role Boundary, and Responsibility (R).¹¹ Findings indicated that URAs, regardless of the type, institution employed at, or experience level, reported elevated levels of occupational stressors, with RO and RA being the most prevalent.¹² As stewards and facilitators of the research process, the negative impact of the stress on URAs also has an adverse effect on the institutions where they are employed.¹³ Institutions and research administrators must work together to identify and develop appropriate and valuable interventions to alleviate some of the stress experienced by RAs.¹⁴

2.2.2 Best Practices for Cultivating and Supporting Successful RAs.

There are many practices represented in the literature for developing the skills of RAs and providing the support needed to ensure success. Onboarding and continued

¹¹ Christine C. A. Katsapis, "The Incidence and Types of Occupational Role Stress among University Research Administrators," *Research Management Review* 19, no. 1 (2012): 1-23, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1002153>.

¹² *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

training for RAs is a consistent focus of much literature related to the support of RAs.

Wagonhurst, in her article, makes a case for why training programs for RAs are crucial:

Research Administrators (RAs), familiar with the cycle of proposal development to program close-out, must be responsive to changes in policies and procedures in their University and department, and must be aware of federal regulations and modifications of sponsors' guidelines. Furthermore, there is a continual need to communicate policies and processes between business administrators, principal investigators, the research staff. The result is a constant learning curve for both junior and senior research administrators.¹⁵

An institution needs to conduct a proper and thorough needs assessment before creating the training program, focusing on multiple factors including, but not limited to, specific problems, the culture of the workplace, and institutional goals.¹⁶ Consideration should be given to the teaching techniques and information taught in a training program; all professionals will not learn in the same way, comprehension levels may differ, and a professional's time is of the essence.¹⁷ Another concern for developing a training program is that what is learned during training may not translate into work performance due to negative influences such as no support from the institution, opinions on the program's effectiveness, and lack of resources to help reinforce the training content.¹⁸

2.2.2.1. Children's Mercy Hospital Case Study.

Children's Mercy Hospital (CMH), located in Kansas City, in preparation for the opening of its revamped Children's Research Institute (CRI), set out to

¹⁵ Carole Wagonhurst, "Developing Effective Training Programs," *The Journal of Research Administration* 33, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 77–81. <https://higherlogicdownload.s3-external-1.amazonaws.com/SRAINTERNATIONAL/VolXXXIIINoII.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAVRDO7IEREB57R7MT&Expires=1617167286&Signature=UlyTmGRevDqcN7iuHt0MZn%2BfHo8%3D>

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 78-79.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

improve the onboarding program for its research faculty, specifically those new to the hospital. The Research Faculty Onboarding Program (RFOP) formed in July 2016, with the following aims and goals:

(1) increase new researcher productivity, (2) train new research faculty on centralized knowledge critical to the organizational culture, (3) engage new research faculty with the research culture, and (4) connect new research faculty with different research departments throughout the organization. The goal was to provide the necessary tangible and intangible resources to become fully functioning investigators at Children's Mercy.¹⁹

Essential to the RFOPs formation was defining onboarding, recognizing the inadequacy of current programs to integrate and develop incoming investigators, and identifying a single orientation event was not sufficient preparation.²⁰ The committee charged with the RFOP formation sought to understand the stakeholders' perspective, especially the recently hired research faculty perspective.²¹ The collective feedback received indicated a comprehensive program is critical to "increase employee productivity, improve retention rates, provide memorable information, and reduce conflicting redundancies in new employee education."²² Another significant component of program development was to identify the best method for presenting the curriculum. The internal website proved the most valuable platform for the RFOP, providing easy access to a central resource of information for new research faculty members, training staff, and hiring managers

¹⁹ Holly R. Zink and Jack D. Curran, "Building a Research Onboarding Program in a Pediatric Hospital: Filling the Orientation Gap with Onboarding and Just-in-Time Education," *Journal of Research Administration* 49, no. 2 (2018): 109–32. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1194921>

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 111–112.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 113.

²² *Ibid.*

and functional means to manage the 4-phase program for employees in various research disciplines and departments.²³ While the target audience for this case study was newly employed research faculty, many of the strategies employed by the CMH RFOP can be applied and adapted to the development of training initiatives, such as engagement with RAs to understand their view and expectations for a training program, and assessment of the effectiveness of the current program.

2.2.2.2. The University of Michigan Case Study.

At the University of Michigan, the central offices for sponsored research administration recognized the divides growing amongst the departments responsible for sponsored projects' research administration.²⁴ Each department displaying its own cultural identity, clashes arose, which negatively impacted administrative activities' flow and management.²⁵ Changes in research exacerbated these issues. Within a decade, Michigan spent 50% more on research infrastructure, creating the necessity and increase in administrative personnel.²⁶ As technological advancements proliferated, new software and databases became integral to the day-to-day operations of sponsored project administration.²⁷ Expansion of federal regulations and compliance requirements required RAs to be more knowledgeable and assume more oversight to ensure compliance.²⁸ Recognizing the implementation of these changes would significantly transform the management

²³ Zink and Curran, 118-125.

²⁴ Sally E. Sivrais and Carrie Disney, "Changing the Culture of Research Administrators at a Public University," *The Journal of Research Administration* 37, no. 2 (November 2006): 60-67.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

and administration of research University leaders wanted to take a proactive approach and begin revamping the fractured research administration culture.²⁹

The responsibility of curating a comprehensive research administration training program was charged to the University's RAs themselves; Senior leaders chose this approach as it would "build a sense of ownership and participation and address the areas of concern for the research community."³⁰ Research Administrators Instructional Network (RAIN) was formed, a Tri-annual four-week training program in which 24 RAs are exposed to topics such as ethics and compliance, project award processing, and intellectual property.³¹ Culture improvement was a major goal on the agenda, and to advance this goal it was essential to solidify a supportive community space for RAs.³² The Research Administrators Network (RAN) debuted in 2001 to provide the opportunity for extended learning and open the lines of communication between central and departmental research personnel.³³ The RAN quarterly meetings served as an excellent conduit for research administrators to share expertise, build and strengthen professional relationships and offer ideas.³⁴ Some of these ideas included RAN Online, a website to upload and share job-related content, and the 'Toolkit' where RAs can access information pertinent to their job responsibilities

²⁹ Sivrais and Disney, 62.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sivrais and Disney, 64.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

and duties; the 'Toolkit' continues to be a valued resource for Michigan's research administrators.³⁵

Another critical point in the plan to improve the research administration culture at the University was to assess the reasons behind the departments' complications and establish a proactive solution to ensure they do not resurface.³⁶ The sponsored programs information implementation team (SPIT) was formed and tasked with the evaluation, analysis, and troubleshooting of issues plaguing the administrative operations of sponsored research.³⁷ Lastly, leaders acknowledged that recognition programs were a valuable asset in bringing cultural change.³⁸ To recognize the hard work, service, and contributions of RAs, the Office of the Vice President of Research (OVPR) implemented two annual awards, the Distinguished Research Administrator and the Exceptional Service Award.³⁹

2.2.3. Professional Growth of Research Administrators.

Johnson explains that institutions invest significant time and effort to supporting their investigators and advises this should also be the case for institutions' RAs.⁴⁰ Investment into the professional development of an RA is vital given they "sustain the ongoing research enterprise with leadership, management, and day-to-day service."⁴¹ The

³⁵ Sivrais and Disney, 64.

³⁶ Ibid., 65.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 66.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Dorothy Johnson, "Why Does Professional Development Matter?," *NCURA Magazine* 50, no. 6 (December 2018): 27. https://www.ncura.edu/Portals/0/Docs/Magazine/2018/December2018_NCURAMagazine.pdf

⁴¹ Ibid., 27.

formal education path is minimal for RAs as there are no bachelor's degree programs and very few master's degree programs.⁴² Therefore, institutional support for professional development is vital for the many individuals who enter the field by happenstance.⁴³ The success of an institution's research endeavors is heavily dependent on the innovative science its researcher's conduct; however, an argument can be made that the administration and management of research hold considerable weight in that success as well.⁴⁴

Sprague and DiFranzo offer a different approach to the professional development of RAs, focusing on adopting a growth mindset.⁴⁵ Research administration remains in a state of fluidity; changes can and will occur at any point, whether it be within the lifecycle of a project, transitions in institutional leadership, governing legislature, or a new grants management software, necessitating an RA to adapt quickly and approach challenges with a proactive mindset.⁴⁶ It is a demanding field to work in and is not without its stressors, but with a growth mindset, RAs can identify them and learn to manage such situations.⁴⁷ The administration of a sponsored research project involves the coordination and cooperation of personnel from different offices and departments, so RAs must be willing to work within a team and learn from their peers to grow professionally.⁴⁸

⁴² Johnson, 27.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Jamie Sprague and Isabella DiFranzo, "Adopting a Growth Mindset in Research Administration to Create New Horizons," *NCURA Magazine* 51, no. 4 (August 2019): 4–5.
https://www.ncura.edu/Portals/0/Docs/Magazine/2019/August2019_NCURAMagazine.pdf

⁴⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Many research administrators do not enter the profession with formal training in research administration and instead come from other disciplines and career paths.⁴⁹ A growth mindset becomes crucial in this circumstance; it allows an organization to recognize the opportunity to nurture and develop the skills a new RA already possesses while providing the resources for them to learn new ones and foster a culture of support and growth.⁵⁰ Sprague and DiFranzo also offer insight on how organizations and RAs can advocate for the growth mindset by incorporating a few practices. Constructive feedback can be beneficial for those pursuing professional growth and establishing a custom where RAs and other personnel actively seek it and learn from it can help in the adoption of the growth mindset.⁵¹ Further, the growth mindset begins to take hold when individuals make an effort to understand a colleague's perspective and position, learn about the duties and responsibilities of another role, and when organizations encourage cross-training within and across offices.⁵²

2.3. Applicability of Literature Review.

The author wanted to create a web-based toolkit to provide the Foundation's RAs with the resources necessary to aid them in their day-to-day functions. The literature review informed the author on the importance of understanding the nature of the research administrator role. Being mindful of the role is essential for catering the toolkit to the needs of the RAs. The literature offered insight on practices to consider and incorporate in the development of the toolkit.

⁴⁹ Sprague and DiFranzo, 5.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

Further, the literature supports the professional development of RAs as critical to success in their role, and the toolkit can serve as a mechanism to facilitate this development.

Chapter 3. Needs Assessment

3.1. Need(s) Assessment.

Through firsthand experience using the Foundation website, the author recognized it was underutilized as a resource for which the Foundation's RAs can look for assistance and support. Currently, the website houses many links to application information for federal sponsors, specifically the NIH and National Science Foundation (NSF), and resources for funding opportunities, both federal and non-federal. The website also houses internal forms and templates used for varying pre-and post-award activities. These current resources provide some help but are more general in the information and content provided. RAs perform tasks and duties that require specific knowledge at the institutional and sponsor levels. The website lacks the appropriate resources that guide RAs on how to execute them effectively.

3.1.1. Assessment of Need.

As a member of the Foundation's OSP staff, the author has daily interactions with the Foundation's RAs. Through these interactions, the author observed disparities in the knowledge RAs had on pre-and post-award sponsor requirements and the Foundation's internal procedures. Outside of the OSP staff, the RAs do not have an additional central resource available to them. The author created a questionnaire to assess the need for the toolkit. The author included questions to identify how frequent RAs used the Foundation website and how helpful RAs found the current resources available and to determine if the website was the best platform to host the toolkit. The author also included questions to help determine the resources included in the toolkit and requested RAs to identify the research administration areas and tasks and processes they thought most important to

their role. Further, the author included demographic questions on experience in research administration and years of employment at the Foundation to see if there were any differences between RAs with less experience and those RAs with more.

The author also requested a meeting each with an RA colleague, the Training and Special Projects Administrator, and the Director of Administration to collect preliminary thoughts on website functionality and resources available to RAs. From the conversation held with the RA, they expressed they did not utilize the website often as a resource to assist with their job functions and many times would rely on communication with OSP staff for guidance.

The author held two meetings with the Training and Special Projects Administrator to gather insight on how the OSP could better serve the RAs, how the website could be improved, and would a toolkit be a feasible and valuable asset. Additionally, the Training and Special Projects Administrator envisioned including training resources and content on the website as an extension of the initial onboarding program RAs go through. The Foundation's Director of Administration provided feedback supporting upgrading the website resources and thought the toolkit for RAs would be beneficial. Further, the Director expressed including specific resources related to federal funding opportunities frequently applied to by the Foundation's researchers.

3.2. Metrics.

The metrics used in establishing the need for the toolkit were the responses collected from the questionnaire issued to the Foundation's RAs. The RAs' responses to questions on their frequency of visits to the website and their rating on the helpfulness of the website's resources

were used to determine if the toolkit should be hosted on the Foundation website. The RAs' responses to what research administration areas and tasks and processes they identified as important provided insight on the resources that were included in the toolkit. Lastly, the demographic results informed if there was variance in the results of the previously mentioned questions between less experienced and more experienced RAs.

3.3. Sources.

The author consulted with an RA colleague, the OSP Training and Special Projects Administrator, and the Foundation's Director of Administration in establishing the need for this Capstone Project.

3.4. Committees.

Committees were not formed to assist the author in the assessment of the need for this project.

Chapter 4. Project Description

4.1. Discussion of Project Elements.

For this Capstone project, the author seeks to develop a web-based resource toolkit to serve the research administrators at the not-for-profit Foundation the author is employed. Essential to establishing a toolkit catered to the Foundation's RAs is to understand their needs. The author created a questionnaire that was distributed to the Foundation's RAs to gain insight into their opinions on the functionality and usefulness of the current website, frequency of use of the website as a resource, and the research administration areas and the tasks and processes the RAs find most important. RAs who volunteer to participate complete the questionnaire electronically via Google Forms.

The author will curate the content for the resource toolkit based on the questionnaire responses of respondents, current resources on the website, and based on feedback from the meetings with the Training and Special Projects Administrator and the Foundation's Director of Administration. A mock version of the web-based resource toolkit will be created for review and future implementation by the Foundation's OSP leadership.

Chapter 5. Methodology

5.1. Methodology Overview.

The author first reviewed the resources currently available to RAs on the Foundation's website and found improvements that could be made to the resources' content and presentation. The next step was to understand how often RAs visited the website and their opinion on the helpfulness of the website's resources. Additionally, the author wanted to identify the research administration areas, and tasks and processes RAs valued as essential to their role, so resources for these could be included in the toolkit. The author selected a questionnaire to collect this necessary feedback. The author conducted the recruitment of respondents through email.

Content for the toolkit is primarily based on the responses from the questionnaire distributed to the Foundation's research administrators. The author also took into consideration the feedback received from the Foundation's Training and Special Projects Administrator and the Director of Administration. Additionally, the author reviewed the toolkits found on many Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) websites as a guide to get a sense of the format and content commonly included in a toolkit for RAs. A mock version of the toolkit was created for review and future implementation by the Foundation's OSP leadership.

5.2. Project Design and Discussion.

Critical to the project design was creating the questionnaire; it allowed the author to collect feedback from twelve respondents, providing the quantitative data to inform the toolkit's type of resources. The questionnaire was developed using Google Forms. There were six questions of varying types: short answer, rating scale, multiple-choice, and demographic. The

questionnaire link was included in the recruitment email distributed to the respondents' professional email addresses.

The research administrators of the Foundation were the target population for the recruitment of respondents. RAs primarily provide administrative support for PIs at the Foundation throughout the various stages of PIs' sponsored projects. In consultation with the training administrator of the Foundation's OSP, the author included other departmental administrative personnel that performed pre-award and post-award functions in the recruitment population. A total of ten department administrative personnel received the email. As respondents' names and email addresses were not collected, the number of these personnel that responded is unknown.

Respondents were allowed to complete the questionnaire at any time that was convenient for them. However, a deadline of four weeks was put in place to allow the author sufficient time to review and analyze the data collected. Respondents' names and email addresses were not collected with responses to the questionnaire; all responses were anonymous and voluntary. The author was not present during the respondents' completion of the questionnaire. Respondents' responses were collected using the Google Forms platform as well.

The author used the responses collected from questions 3 and 4 of the questionnaire to identify and determine the research administration areas and the tasks and processes for which resources need to be included. The author selected the top 5 research administration areas and the top 5 of tasks and processes from the responses. Formatting and ease of use were additional factors to the establishment of the toolkit. For this, the author reviewed examples of toolkits at many IHEs. The project's final product was a mock version of the toolkit, created using the free

online website development platform, Wix. The mock version toolkit will be presented to the Foundation's OSP leadership for review and future implementation.

5.3. Discussion of Questionnaire.

As indicated in the latter sections, the questionnaire was created via Google Forms. The author included a total of six questions on the questionnaire. The questions are as follows:

1. During the workweek, Monday – Friday, approximately how many times do you access the website for help with research administrative tasks? Please provide a numerical answer (i.e., 5).
2. How would you rate the helpfulness of the research administration resources currently available on the website?
3. Please select five (5) areas of research administration for which you would like the website to provide improved and additional resources.
4. Please select five (5) research administration tasks or processes for which you would like to see resources included on the website.
5. How many years have you been employed at RFMH?
6. How many years of experience do you have in research administration?

Question 1 assesses the frequency of use of the website by Foundation RAs. Question 2 was included to understand how useful RAs found the current website resources. From these questions, the author wanted to see how much traffic the website was garnering and if it would be the best location for the toolkit.

Questions 3 and 4 requested respondents to select five areas of research administration and five research administration tasks or processes they wanted resources for in the toolkit. The

areas of research administration options included: professional development, ethics & compliance, protection of human & animal subjects, lifecycle of sponsored project, proposal development, project management, conflict of interest, and InfoEd. The research administration tasks, and processes options included: budget preparation, InfoEd, TIQR set-up, internal forms, OS pages, JITs, institutional letters, and F-Task. An "Other" option was also made available to each question and allowed the respondents to write an option not included on the predetermined list. The author created these questions to assess what RAs valued as critical to completing their day-to-day functions.

The author included two demographic questions, questions 5 and 6, to assess the years of experience in research administration of respondents and the length of employment at the Foundation. The author further wanted to understand if respondents new to the field and respondents who had more experience would identify similar selections for the questionnaire's beginning four questions.

Chapter 6. Project Results and Discussion

6.1. Project Result 1. Questionnaire Responses

The questionnaire featured six questions in total and was developed and disseminated via Google Forms. The author submitted a protocol application to the Johns Hopkins IRB before the recruitment phase to seek exemption status. The author received approval from the IRB to recruit respondents through email and issue the questionnaire electronically to respondents' professional email addresses. The recruitment email was distributed to a total of 31 RAs. The author received 12 responses in total, a 38.7% response rate.

6.1.1. Website Usage and Assessment of Helpfulness

The author included questions 1 and 2 of the questionnaire to understand how many times per week RAs accessed the Foundation's website and assess how helpful they found it. Figure 1. Respondents' Weekly Visits to the Foundation's Website represents the distribution of how frequently respondents visited the website for help during the workweek.

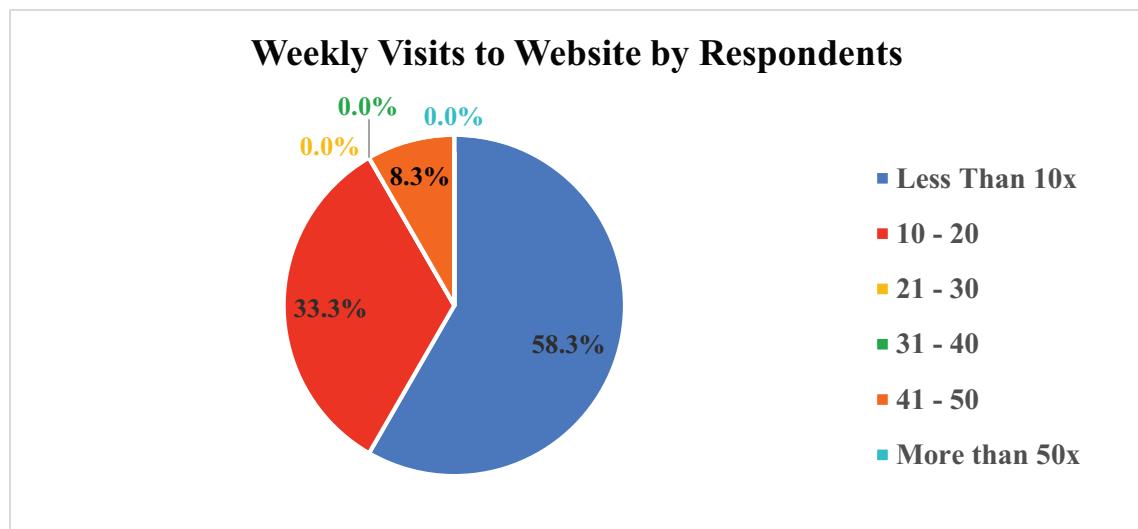


Figure 1. Respondents' Weekly Visits to the Foundation's Website.

More than half, 58.3%, of respondents indicated that they visit the website for help less than ten times per workweek. A third of respondents, 33.3%, seek help from the website ten to twenty times a week. Zero respondents frequented the website between 21 – 30, 31 – 40, and more than 50 times per week, and only 8.3% of respondents accessed the website between forty-one and fifty times.

The author needed to assess if the Foundation website would be a suitable platform for the toolkit. It was important to discern if RAs were visiting the Foundation website and using the current resources for help. While the frequency of accessing the website varied amongst the respondents, the results indicated RAs did refer to the website for help. There were no respondents who indicated that they did not visit the website at all during the workweek. In capturing these results on how often RAs visited the website for help, the author was able to determine the Foundation website would be a suitable platform for the toolkit.

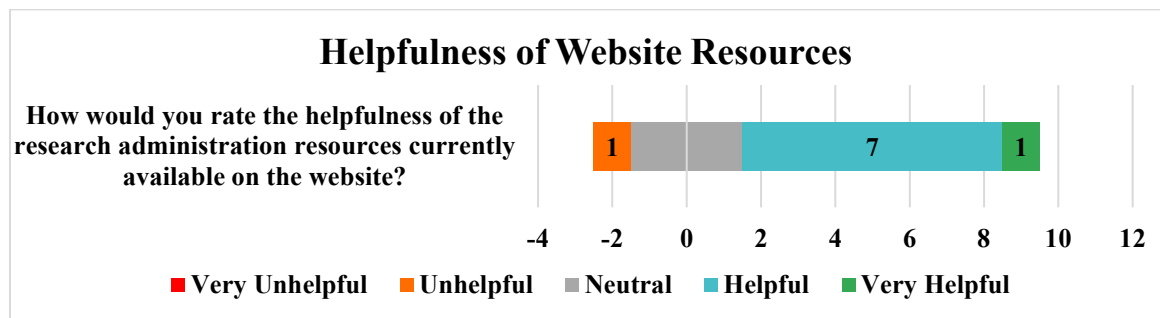


Figure 2. Respondents' Rating on the Helpfulness of Website Resources.

Figure 2. Respondents' Rating on the Helpfulness of Website Resources represents the respondents' rating on the helpfulness of the current research administration resources available to them on the website. The majority of respondents, seven out of the twelve (58.3%), rated the website's resources as helpful. Three of the twelve (25%) respondents found the resources neither helpful nor unhelpful. Of the

remaining respondents, one indicated the resources were unhelpful and another very helpful.

RAs must be supported in their role and have the necessary and helpful tools to do so. It was important for the author to assess the RAs' perspective on the helpfulness of website resources. Based on the results of the questionnaire, most RAs were finding the current resources useful, however just over 30% of the responding RAs found resources unhelpful or remained neutral. For RAs who do not find the resources provided to them helpful, they may not feel supported and appropriately equipped in executing their duties. The results indicated the website, and its resources needed improvement.

6.1.2. Selected Areas of Research Administration and Tasks & Processes

The next set of questions, 3 and 4, required respondents to select five research administration areas and five tasks and processes, respectively. The responses to these two questions were critical for the author to receive feedback from RAs as it indicated the type of content the toolkit should include. Figure 3. Areas of Research Administration Valued Most Important by Respondents represents the areas of research administration respondents valued as most important to have resources for on the website.

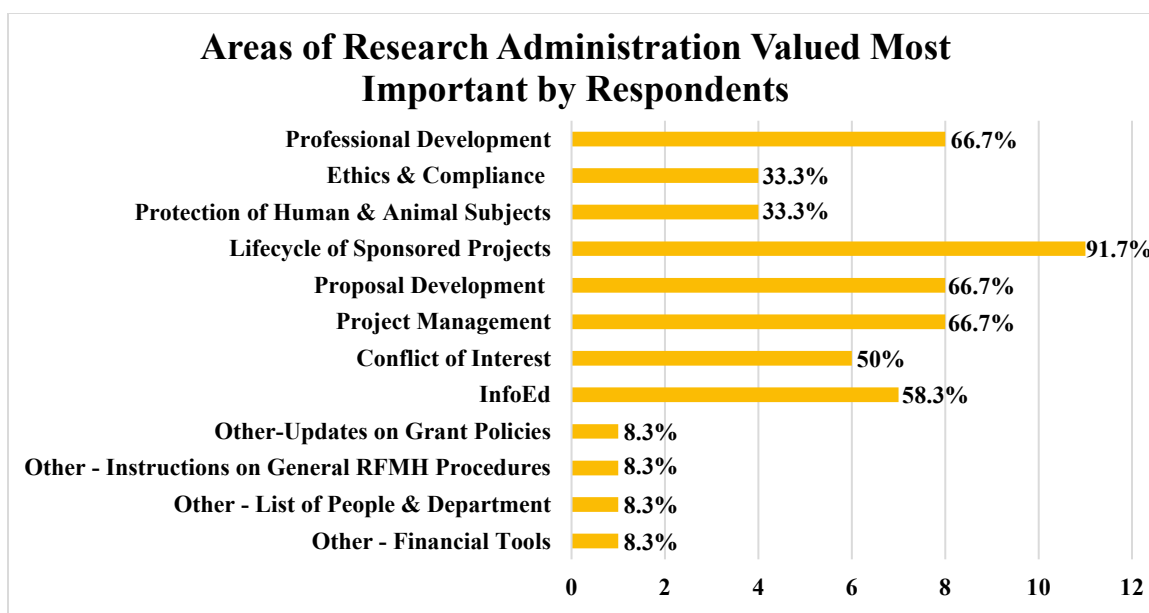


Figure 3. Areas of Research Administration Valued Most Important by Respondents.

The lifecycle of sponsored projects was the top area of research administration selected amongst the respondents at 91.7%, eleven out of the twelve. Professional development (66.7%), proposal development (66.7%), project management (66.7%), and InfoEd (58.3%) were the following areas selected by a majority of the respondents. Of the remaining areas of research administration, fifty percent of the respondents identified conflict of interest, while 33.3% each selected ethics & compliance and protection of human & animal subjects. Four respondents chose the 'Other' option, which allowed them to provide a write-in response; each response was different and included updates on grant policies, instructions on general RFMH procedures, a list of people & departments, and financial tools.

The intended purpose of the toolkit is to serve as a central resource on the website for which RAs can access the necessary information and guidance to do their jobs. The author needed input from RAs on the research administration areas they considered to be most valuable and where improvements to website resources were needed. Based on the

results of the questionnaire, the top five research administrations areas determined the content to be included in the toolkit. Lifecycle of sponsored projects, that is the stages a project goes through from selection of a funding opportunity all the way to project completion, was overwhelmingly selected by 91.7% of the respondents. RAs may not always have responsibilities at every stage of a project, and it is important for RAs to understand the progression of a project as it moves through its lifecycle. This becomes critical if there is a shift in the job functions for an RA and it involves working with the project at a different stage.

Professional development, proposal development, and project management were the next research administration areas selected as most important for RAs, with each having the same selection rate of 66.7%. RAs selection of professional development indicates interest in expanding their knowledge of and skill set in research administration, and career advancement. The duties of an RA are directly involved in proposal development and project management of an award, and include, but not limited to, budget preparation for an application, financial management of an award, working with subrecipient institutions, and others. InfoEd was the fifth most important area to RAs. InfoEd is the submission software the Foundation uses to submit federal applications, and maintain documentation pertaining to all applications and its sponsored projects. As a critical system to the administrative management of grants resources for InfoEd are necessary to help RAs become proficient in its use.

Figure 4. Tasks & Processes Valued Most Important by Respondents displays the tasks and processes respondents identified resources were needed for on the website. The tasks and processes are representative of those commonly executed by Foundation RAs.

Other Support (OS) Pages was the top selection, identified by all respondents. The top choices following included budget preparation (66.7%), TIQR set-up (58.3%), just-in-time (JITs) (58.3%), and institutional letters (58.3%). For the remaining options, respondents selected internal forms (50%), F-task (41.7%), and InfoEd (33.3%); only one respondent chose the 'Other' option and wrote in grant guideline updates.

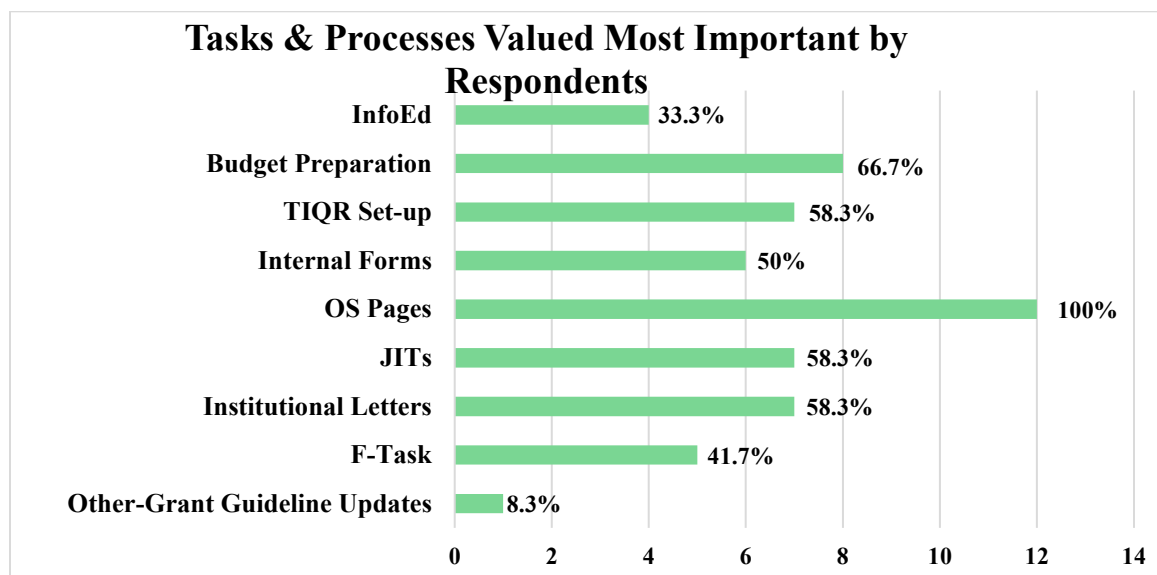


Figure 4. Tasks & Processes Valued Most Important by Respondents.

The author sought to understand, of the listed tasks and processes, which ones did Foundation RAs identify as most important to their role and in need of improved resources. The top five tasks and processes selected by RAs were used in the determination of the content included in the toolkit. Other Support (OS) Pages was selected by all respondents. OS Pages document the resources and funding support an investigator is currently receiving and that support which is pending. It is typically required for federal applications at Just-In-Time (JIT) submissions and for progress reporting, and a document RAs assist investigators with.

Budget preparation is key in the skill set of an RA and was the second highest selection by respondents at 66.7%. In the application process, the budget of a proposal is a critical area of review for sponsors, therefore RAs must be skilled in helping PIs in the budget's development and preparation. TIQR set-up, JITs, and institutional letters all had the same selection rate of 58.3%. TIQR is the internal system the Foundation uses to facilitate and manage pre- and post-award procedures. RAs are required to use this system and must understand how to initiate a TIQR ticket along with choosing the correct ticket type.

The JIT requests documentation not required at the time an application is submitted and are initiated by the sponsor when an application is under consideration for funding. RAs work with PIs to collect the necessary documentation requested by the sponsor and work with the OSP pre-award staff to make any changes and address any concerns prior to the JIT submission. The Foundation has many PIs who apply for federal career development awards which require institutional support letters. RAs are tasked with assisting PIs in composing the letter and routing to the OSP pre-award team for review prior to signature from institution signing officials. These tasks and processes are common in the daily responsibilities for the Foundation's RAs and having access to helpful resources can prove valuable in improving an RA's ability to execute these tasks and processes effectively.

6.1.3. Demographics of Respondents

The author collected demographic data on the respondents, specifically the number of years they have been employed at the Foundation and years of experience in the research administration field. Figure 5. Years Employed at the Foundation and Figure 6. Years of

Experience in Research Administration provide the distribution of the demographical data collected from respondents. The demographic data collected showed the respondents represented a range of years employed at the Foundation and years of experience in the field. The following analysis indicated the toolkit could be beneficial for both newer RAs and experienced RAs alike.

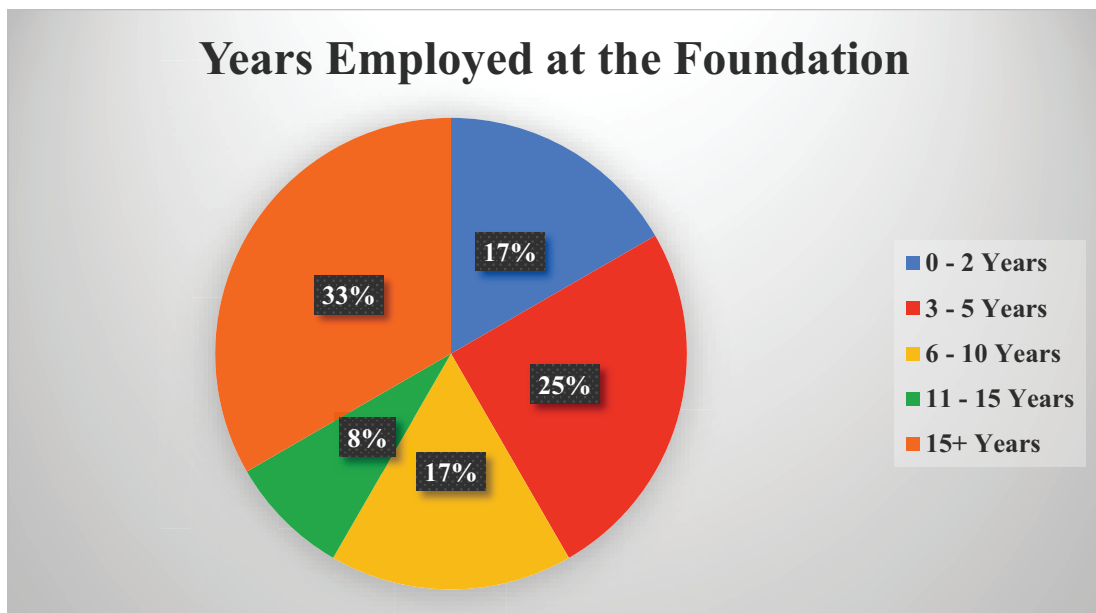


Figure 5. Years Employed at the Foundation.



Figure 6. Years of Experience in Research Administration

In analyzing the data for years employed at the Foundation the number of respondents with 0 to 2 years and those with 6 to 10 years employment were the same at 17%. The author analyzed the raw data collected from the responses and of the top five research administration areas and the top five tasks and processes, most respondents in both categories made similar selections. However, there were instances where the numbers indicated a difference of what those with 0 to 2 years and those with 6 to 10 years identified as important.

All respondents with 0 to 2 years' employment indicated InfoEd as an important area, whereas none of the respondents in the 6 to 10 years' employment bracket selected InfoEd. Respondents with 0 to 2 years' employment may not have reached the proficiency level of using InfoEd as those respondents who have been at the Foundation longer and need resources to help them as they continue to become proficient with InfoEd. Regarding the tasks and processes, all respondents with 6 to 10 years' employment indicated institutional letters and JITs as most important for them, whereas no respondents with 0 to 2 years' employment selected either option. This suggests that the exposure which respondents in the 0 to 2 years of employment group has to both tasks may be lower. Respondents in this group may not have had the opportunity to work with a JIT submission or an NIH career development award that requires the institutional letter.

For years of experience in research administration the number of respondents with 3 to 5 years' experience and those with 15+ years' experience was very close at 33% and 34% respectively. In the author's analysis of the raw data collected from the questionnaire responses, respondents with 3 to 5 years' experience and 15+ years' experience made similar selections for areas or research administration and the tasks & processes listed in

the questionnaire. There were two areas of research administration and two tasks and processes that indicated a difference in what was important to both groups.

InfoEd was one of the research areas indicated to be most important by all the respondents with 3 to 5 years' experience, whereas only one respondent with 15+ years' experience indicated the same. Similar to the respondents with 0 to 2 years' employment, this result suggests that the InfoEd proficiency level of respondents with 3 to 5 years' experience differs from those more experienced RAs and resources to improve their proficiency are needed. Professional development was most important to the majority of respondents with 15+ years' experience but not to those with 3 to 5 years' as only one of the respondents in this category indicated the same. This suggests respondents farther along in experience have selected research administration as their career path and want to know of opportunities to help with advancement in the career. For respondents with 3 to 5 years' experience having professional development resources may not be a priority as they are still new to the field and may not yet have made the decision to fully commit to the RA career path.

Budget preparation was identified as most important of the listed tasks and processes by all respondents with 15+ years' experience, while only half of the respondents with 3 to 5 years' experience made the same selection. This is an interesting finding as it would be assumed the respondents with less experience would seek more resources for this critical task, however budgets for proposals can become complicated and are subject to policies changes, the more experienced respondents recognize this and see the need to have updated resources for budget preparation. JITs was the other of the listed tasks and processes that revealed a difference of importance between the groups. All the respondents

with 3 to 5 years' experience selected JITs, whereas only half of the respondents with 15+ years' experience did the same. The results suggest experience plays a significant factor in the difference between the groups, RAs with 3 to 5 years' experience may not have the level of expertise in processing JITs that an RA with 15+ years' experience has, so it is important for them to have resources to help improve their understanding of JIT submissions.

6.2. Project Result 2. Toolkit

The author selected the Foundation's website as the platform to host the toolkit. This decision was based on the website's accessibility and capacity to serve as a central location. Further, traffic to the website, while inconsistent amongst questionnaire respondents, the data indicated most found the website resources helpful. The presentation of the toolkit and ease of use was another critical component. The author reviewed the current research administration toolkits available on the websites of IHEs for guidance on how best to structure and organize the toolkit.

The resources included in the toolkit were based on the questionnaire responses of the Foundation's RAs. The data collected from questions 3 and 4 of the questionnaire indicated to the author the areas of research administration and the tasks and processes RAs valued most and they identified as necessary to execute their duties. The author focused on providing content for the top five selections of questions 3 and 4. The top selections for the areas of research administration question were lifecycle of sponsored projects, professional development, proposal development, project management, and InfoEd. The top selections for the tasks and processes question were OS pages, budget preparation, TIQR set up, JITs, and institutional letters.

The toolkit includes an introduction page with links to the six categories of the toolkit. Lifecycle of Sponsored Projects is the first category, and the page provides a visual representation

of the lifecycle along with explanations of each stage of a project's lifecycle. OSP Processes & Procedures follows as the second category, explaining how the Foundation's OSP facilitates the management of all projects through the internal TIQR system, and the institutional forms RAs will typically need to have prepared; this section provides links to the TIQR guideline manual, example TIQR tickets and the templates for the institutional forms. Pre-Award Resources is the third category focusing on proposal development and post- submission. Proposal development includes resources for application deadlines & review policy, budget preparation, subawards, and NIH K grants, and a section dedicated to T32 grants, resources for the T32 grants are in the development stages. Post-submission resources include those for JITs and OS Pages. The resources come in various forms such as guidelines, templates, instructions, manuals, and checklists.

InfoEd has a dedicated page in the toolkit and is set up to include training videos to introduce the software, help guide RAs through building an application, and set up the budget along with guidance on troubleshooting any budgetary issues that may arise. The Foundation's OSP is in the process of developing these training videos. Post-award Resources are the fifth category providing resources for project management procedures that include reporting, account management, and subawards; RAs are provided links to templates, instructions, checklists, and guidelines. The final category in the toolkit is dedicated to professional development and includes links to education opportunities, such as graduate programs and certified research administrator programs, and links to professional organizations.

The toolkit is a mock version, created using the free online website development platform, Wix, and will be provided to Foundation OSP leaders for further assessment.

Chapter 7. Recommendations and Discussion

7.1. Introduction

A research administration toolkit can be a valuable addition to an institution's onboarding program for new research administrators. It can serve as a mainstay for RAs as they grow in the profession and even for those RAs who have years of experience. With multiple sources of support at their disposal, RAs can become more confident in executing their functions. In completing this Capstone project, the author presents the following four recommendations in building a web-based toolkit.

7.2. Recommendations to The Foundation and other institutions interested in building a web-based toolkit.

7.2.1. Recommendation 1: The Foundation and other institutions seeking to build a web-based toolkit should involve Research Administrators (RA) in the process of identifying the content to add in the toolkit.

The Foundation and other institutions interested in building a web-based toolkit should make an effort to involve RAs in developing the toolkit; this also applies to any other programs related to their training and professional development. The literature review of the project supported the concept of RAs being active participants in their learning and development. RAs understand their role and the nuances that accompany their daily responsibilities. They are the experts on what is necessary to execute their jobs. The personal insight is critical and valuable to institutions as it provides the framework for the content and resources featured in the toolkit. The involvement of RAs can take multiple forms, such as assessing their needs via a survey, conducting focus groups, and including them on the development team.

7.2.2. Recommendation 2: The Foundation and other institutions should make the toolkit user-friendly.

The Foundation and other institutions who want to host the toolkit on a website need to allow for widespread accessibility by RAs. Equally important is the functionality of the toolkit; it must be user-friendly for all. RAs work in a fast-paced environment typically driven by deadlines and perform various duties throughout a sponsored project's lifecycle; they must locate the information and resources needed quickly. The author found surveying how other institutions formatted their toolkits helpful in the building of the toolkit. Further, the toolkit and its resources should not be oversaturated with information but instead focused on what the RA needs to know.

7.2.3. Recommendation 3: The Foundation's OSP and other institutions' OSP can use the toolkit to improve and strengthen the communication with Departments.

The Foundation's OSPs and the OSPs of other institutions play a critical role in research administration, as many of them are charged with the management of an institution's research portfolio. The relationship between the OSP and a research division and department are critical to effective and successful research administration. The toolkit can serve as an extension of the services and help OSPs provide. OSPs can employ the toolkit for communicating important updates from sponsors or internally, share templates of standard documents used in the application process, provide training videos on how to use software and databases, and many other uses. The toolkit offers the opportunity for OSPs to manage the burden on their staff as well. With a secondary resource of support, OSP personnel can direct research administrators to the toolkit when necessary, allowing OSP personnel to focus attention on more complex issues at hand.

7.2.4. Recommendation 4: The Foundation and other institutions should regularly update the toolkit as changes occur and issue annual evaluations of the toolkit.

Changes occur in research and research administration frequently. These changes may include updates in sponsor policies, new compliance regulations, or formatting updates for federal application documents. The Foundation and other institutions, PIs, and RAs need to adjust and comply with these changes. Therefore, the toolkit must be updated regularly to keep abreast with the changes. The author also recommends the Foundation and other institutions conduct yearly evaluations on the toolkit to assess what is working well and where improvements can be made.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

The proper execution of research administration depends on the knowledge and skill set of well-trained research administrators (RAs). In a role that wears multiple hats and operates in an environment of constant learning, support from institutions and organizations is paramount. RAs should have access to resources that promote professional growth, support initial onboarding and training, and provide guidance on effectively performing their duties. The author observed the gaps of knowledge amongst the Foundation's RAs and the current resources on the website were in need of improvement and wanted to find a solution to these issues.

The author focused the Capstone Project on the development of a website resource toolkit for research administrators. The literature review provided insight into methods and practices for supporting RAs after initial onboarding and as they continued to grow professionally. The literature advocated for the inclusion and active participation of RAs in developing programs and products catered to their profession. The questionnaire distributed to the Foundation's RAs assessed their current use of the website resources, helpfulness of these resources, and requested they identify research administration areas and tasks and processes most essential to their duties where improvement of the resources was needed. The author used questionnaire data to determine the content included in the resulting toolkit.

The toolkit is intended to be a secondary source of support and information for the Foundation's RAs. The resources available to them in the toolkit will provide guidance on internal pre-award and post-award functions, professional development opportunities, and additional research administration topics. Further, the toolkit is intended to help the Foundation's OSP better facilitate communication of updates and other necessary information to RAs. The

author created a mock version of the toolkit for further review and approval by the Foundation's OSP leadership.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

RFMH Website Resources Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

By completing this survey or questionnaire, you are consenting to be in this research study. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time. This questionnaire assesses the resources, or lack thereof, provided to Research Administrators on the current RFMH website. The responses collected will guide in making helpful improvements and additions to the resources available on the website. I am a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University. This information will be used in the Capstone Project I am conducting in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science Degree in Research Administration. Your participation in the questionnaire is voluntary. If you elect to participate, please answer the following questions regarding your personal experience with the current RFMH website.

Thank you,
Dana-Marie Gomes
dana.gomes@nyspi.columbia.edu

* Required

1. During the workweek, Monday - Friday, approximately how many times do you access the website for help with research administrative tasks? Please provide a numerical answer (i.e., 5) *

2. How would you rate the helpfulness of the research administration resources currently available on the website? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very Unhelpful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Helpful

3. Please select five (5) areas of research administration for which you would like the website to provide improved and additional resources. *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Professional Development
- ☐ Ethics & Compliance
- ☐ Protection of Human & Animal Subjects
- ☐ Lifecycle of Sponsored Project
- ☐ Proposal Development
- ☐ Project Management
- ☐ Conflict of Interest
- ☐ InfoEd

Other: ☐ _____

4. Please select five (5) research administration tasks or processes for which you would like to see resources included on the website. *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ InfoEd
- ☐ Budget Preparation
- ☐ TIQR Set-up
- ☐ Internal Forms
- ☐ OS Pages
- ☐ JITs
- ☐ Institutional Letters
- ☐ F-Task

Other: ☐ _____

Respondent Time at RFMH and Experience

The following questions assess respondents' time at RFMH and the years of experience in the research administration field.

5. How many years have you been employed at RFMH? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 0 - 2 Years
- ☐ 3 - 5 Years
- ☐ 6 - 10 Years
- ☐ 11 - 15 Years
- ☐ 15+ Years

6. How many years of experience do you have in research administration? *

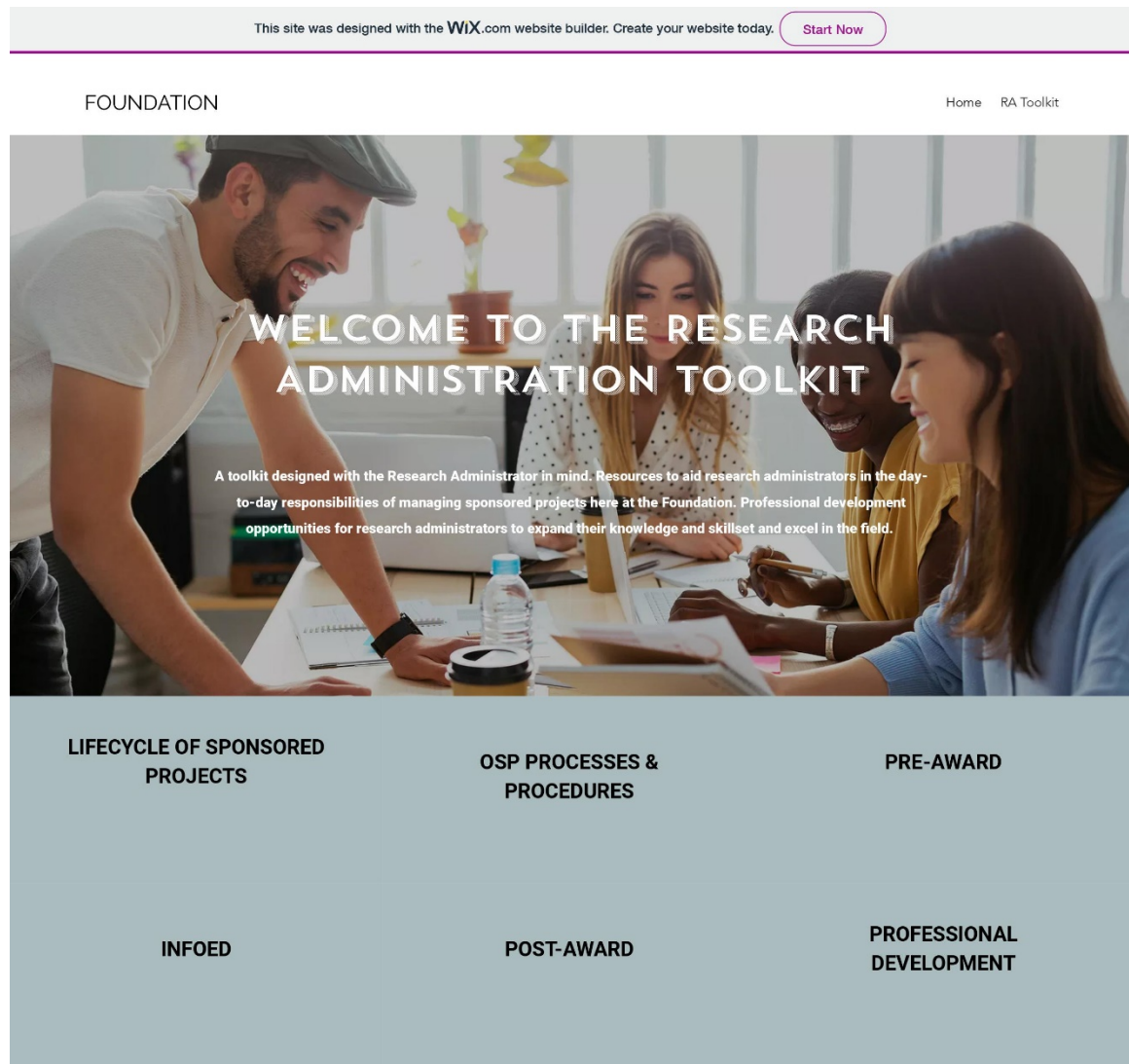
Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 0 - 2 Years
- ☐ 3 - 5 Years
- ☐ 6 - 10 Years
- ☐ 11 - 15 Years
- ☐ 15+ Years

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Google Forms

Appendix 2. Mock Version Research Administration Resource Toolkit



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LIFECYCLE OF SPONSORED PROJECT

A sponsored project enters into a lifecycle, defined by two phases, Pre-Award, and Post-Award. The Pre-Award involves, finding funding opportunities, proposal development, and proposal submission. If an award is made for the project, it moves into the next stage. The Post-Award stage involves setting up the award, award management, and award closeout. Research compliance is required to be practiced and maintained throughout the entire project's lifecycle. To learn more about the lifecycle and the role of OSP in each stage, please see below.



Find Funding

Federal and non-federal sponsors provide online access to their funding opportunities. RAs can help PIs to search the opportunities best suited to their field of research and/or research ideas using the Funding Opportunities resources [link here](#). OSP encourages RAs to join the foundation's mailing list for access to those funding opportunities not made publicly available.

Develop Proposal

Important to the proposal development process is selection of the appropriate sponsor and grant mechanisms. OSP will provide guidance to PIs and RAs when needed. Assistance with budget preparation, application requirements, proposals for resubmission and renewal will also be provided. OSP highly recommends PIs and RAs schedule pre-submission consultations prior to submitting grant applications.

Proposal Submission

Proposal documents are compiled and routed via TQR to the OSP Pre-Award team for review. The team will provide recommendations on all applications to ensure compliance with sponsor and institutional policies and requirements prior to submission. The team will also provide assistance in troubleshooting any issues with submissions via InfoEd, eRA Commons, and other sponsor portals.

Award Setup

The Notice of Award (NOA) is issued by the sponsor and received by the OSP. OSP issues an email notification to the PI. An account number is assigned by the operations team and a request routed to the Foundation's Central Office team to create and issue a PTA, an identifier used in the account management systems. The PTA is received from Central office and issued to the PI and RA(s) by the operations team.

Manage Award

Work on the project and reporting commences at this stage. Reporting requirements of sponsors typically include research progress, milestones, financials, and other types depending on the sponsor. OSP will provide guidance on the necessary information to complete these reports and assist in preparation as needed. Prior to submission, the reports will be reviewed to ensure compliance with sponsor instructions and institutional policies. Other post-award processes such as rebudgets, no cost extensions are addressed in this stage.

Award Closeout

The closeout stage involves the completion of all work on the project. Closeout of an award requires final reports on financial accounting, progress of the research work, performed and achievements, and certification of all inventions developed and/or used during the award period. OSP post-award team will work with PIs and RAs on the preparation and completion of the closeout reports.

Research Compliance

Projects involving human subjects and animal subjects must have approval from the IRB and IACUC. Please work with the IRB and IACUC offices in submitting protocol applications and obtaining the necessary training required for work with human and animal subjects. Financial Conflicts of Interest (COI) must be disclosed, please work with OSP on the process of COI disclosure.

OSP PROCESSES & PROCEDURES

OSP processes and procedures are facilitated and managed through TIQR. Information on TIQR types, when they are to be used, and samples are provided in this section. OSP requires internal forms for specific processes and procedures, templates of those forms are linked below.

TIQR Types

The following provides a brief overview of what each TIQR type is used for. Examples of each TIQR are included for reference. Please see the TIQR Guidelines Manual for further information, linked [here](#).

Request App#/InfoEd PT#

For applications not using InfoEd for submissions (i.e., inbound subcontract applications, non-federal applications) use this TIQR to request an application # or an InfoEd PT#.

[Example TIQR](#)

Application

For the review and submission of federal, non-federal and inbound subcontract applications. Please review the TIQR guidelines for further information.

[Example TIQR](#)

Just-In-Time

JIT TIQR is opened by OSP for processing when OSP receives email notification from the sponsor requesting the submission of JIT documents.

[Example TIQR](#)

Progress Report

For review and submission of the sponsor required annual progress reports. This TIQR type is used for R&A Annual RPPR, Final RPPR, and Interim RPPR.

[Example TIQR](#)

Interim Report

Interim reports are progress/financial reports requested by a sponsor outside of the annual reporting period. The TIQR is initiated by the User (RA or PI).

[Example TIQR](#)

No Cost Extension

This TIQR is initiated to request an extension of the end date of a final budget period or a previously approved project period with no additional funds requested.

[Example TIQR](#)

Carry Over

Users will initiate the carry over process of unobligated funds via this TIQR type. Please review the NOA to identify if carry over is automatic or requires prior approval.

[Example TIQR](#)

Close Out/Financial Report

Sponsors require final reports for the close out stage of an award. Financial reports may be required by the sponsor outside of the annual report.

[Example TIQR](#)

Re-Budget

Instances may arise where the funds for an award need to be re-budgeted. The user will initiate this TIQR to begin the re-budgeting process of an account.

[Example TIQR](#)

Subaward Execution/Modification

This TIQR is used to execute Agreements and Amendments for Inbound and Outbound subawards.

[Example TIQR](#)

Advance Setup

This TIQR is initiated to set up an account in advance prior to the receipt of a NOA or a contract.

[Example TIQR](#)

Systems Access

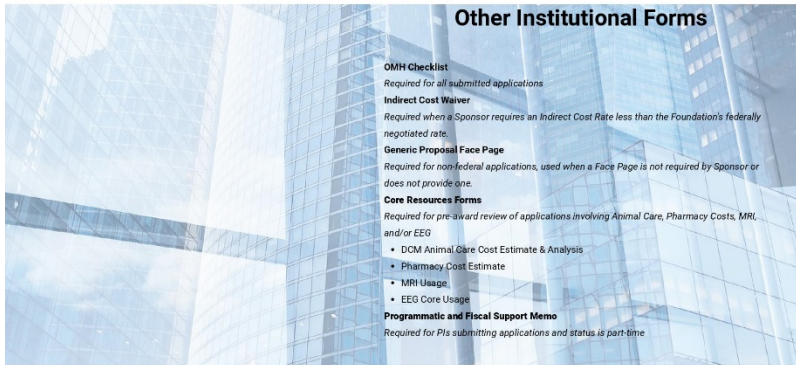
This TIQR is initiated to request access to the Foundation's internal systems (i.e., InfoEd, TIQR).

[Example TIQR](#)

OSP IQ

Have a question or issue for OSP? Please use this TIQR to submit your query.

[Example TIQR](#)



Other Institutional Forms

OMH Checklist
Required for all submitted applications

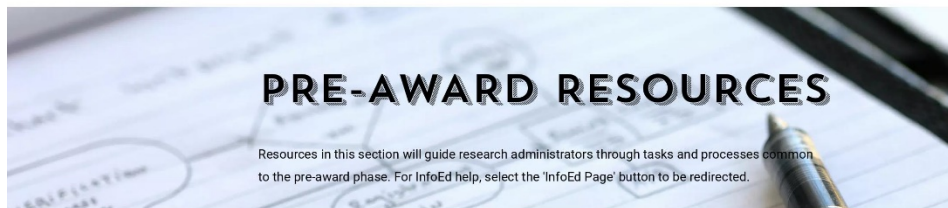
Indirect Cost Waiver
Required when a Sponsor requires an Indirect Cost Rate less than the Foundation's federally negotiated rate.

Generic Proposal Face Page
Required for non-federal applications, used when a Face Page is not required by Sponsor or does not provide one.

Core Resources Forms
Required for pre-award review of applications involving Animal Care, Pharmacy Costs, MRI, and/or EEG

- DCM Animal Care Cost Estimate & Analysis
- Pharmacy Cost Estimate
- MRI Usage
- EEG Core Usage

Programmatic and Fiscal Support Memo
Required for PIs submitting applications and status is part-time



PRE-AWARD RESOURCES

Resources in this section will guide research administrators through tasks and processes common to the pre-award phase. For InfoEd help, select the 'InfoEd Page' button to be redirected.

[InfoEd Page](#)

Proposal Development

The PI has selected the Funding Opportunity or Request for Proposal they want to apply to and the proposal development phase begins. Here resources on application deadlines & policy, budget preparation, subawards, and specific NIH award mechanisms are provided.

Application Deadlines & Review Policy

OSP has set internal deadlines to ensure submissions are reviewed and submitted by the sponsor deadline. Reviews are typically done in two stages, Administrative, and Final, see the submission checklist attachment for a list of documents required for the Administrative Packet and Final Packet. Please send a comment in the Application Review TIQR when each is ready for review.

- [Internal Deadlines Table](#)
- [Administrative and Final Packet Checklist](#)

Budget Prep

Budget preparation is a critical component in the proposal development stage. Please see the following resources for guidance:

- [Budget Guidelines](#)
- [Budget Checklist](#)
- [PHS 398 Budget Template](#)
- [TPE Converter](#)
- [Budget Justification Template](#)
- [F&A Rate Agreement](#)

NIH K Awards

This section is dedicated to providing specific guidance for NIH Research Career Development Awards (K Awards). Pre-submission meetings are highly recommended prior to submission of the application.

- [NIH K Awards Webpage: https://researchtraining.nih.gov/programs/career-development](https://researchtraining.nih.gov/programs/career-development)
- [Submission Checklist](#)
- [Institutional Commitment Letter Template](#)
- [ORCID ID Help](#)

NIH T32 Grants

COMING SOON: OSP is in the process of developing content to provide guidance on applications to the NIH T32 mechanism.

Subawards

The following resources will guide in the preparation and processing of Inbound (Foundation is the sub-recipient) and Outbound (Foundation is the prime) subawards.

- [Subaward Manual](#)
- [Foundation Face Page Templates](#)
 - [Inbound Subaward Proposal Face Page](#)
 - [Outbound Subaward Proposal Face Page](#)
- [Submission Checklist for Subawards \(Inbound & Outbound\)](#)

Post-Submission Resources

For applications under consideration and review for funding, sponsors will request Just-In-Time (JIT) information. JIT information is updated/additional information that was not required at the time the original application was submitted. NOTE: JITs are not a guarantee of funding.

JITs

The request for JIT information is issued via email to OSP. OSP will open the TIQR to begin the JIT processing. The email will indicate the documents required for the JIT.

- NIH JIT
 - Common Information and Documents Requested
 - NIH Grants Policy Statement: [JIT Procedures](#)
 - Submission Deadline: 10 Business Days after email Notification
- Internal OSP Deadline: 3 Days prior to Sponsor Deadline

OS Pages

NIH HAS UPDATED THE OTHER SUPPORT FORMAT PAGE FOR APPLICATION DUE DATES AND RPPR SUBMISSIONS ON AND AFTER MAY 25, 2021.

The Other Support (OS) Page is requested at JIT submission and, if applicable, at the submission of the Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR). Please click [here](#) for more information from the NIH and see the following resources for aid in creating and updating OS Pages:

- **NEW** OS Page Template
 - Sample NEW OS Page
- **OLD** OS Page Template
- Effort Tool: Mixed Model Template
- Common Pre-Award Review Comments on OS Pages

NOTE: As NIH provides more guidance on the new format OSP will issue updates and further resources to aid in the transition.



Introduction to InfoED

This video will provide an introduction to InfoEd. InfoEd is the submission software primarily used in the submission of federal grant applications. The video will introduce the platform and basic functions of InfoEd.

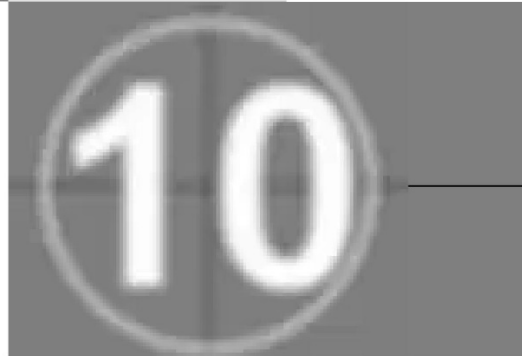


Building an Application

The following video will guide viewers through the process of building an application in InfoEd.

Budget

This video will explain how to use the budget tools and build budgets for application submissions. It will address common issues that may arise and how to troubleshoot them.



POST-AWARD RESOURCES

The project is awarded and work on the project commences. This section will provide resources to help RAs in post-award tasks and processes involved with the management of sponsored projects.

Project Management

Reporting

Critical to the management of a sponsored project is the submission of sponsor required annual reports and requested interim reports.

NIH Annual RPPR

Reviewed by the Pre-Award team prior to submission

- RPPR Tips and Reminders
- Common Pre-Award Review Comments on OS Pages
- NIH RPPR Instructional Guide

Federal Financial Report

Prepared by OSP office and reviewed by RA & PI

- Federal Financial Report (FFR) Form (SF-425)

Interim Report

- Non-annual reports, project progress/financial, requested by the Sponsor
- See Sponsor Instructions for required information

Account Management

Guidance and tools for common processes involved in the financial management of an award:

- Rebudget:
 - Re-Budget Request Spreadsheet
- Carry Over
 - Checklist of Required Documents
 - Letter Template
- No Cost Extension (NCE)
 - Checklist of Required Documents
 - Letter Template
- Advance Expenditure Authorization (AEA)
 - Checklist of Required Documents

Subawards

OUTBOUND (FOUNDATION IS PRIME)

Following the receipt of a NOA, the execution of subaward Agreements and Amendments from the Foundation to Subrecipient institutions is initiated. Agreements and Amendments are prepared and processed by the Subaward Administrator.

- Required Docs from Subrecipient:
 - Statement of Work (SOW), Detailed Budget for current period, and Budget Justification

INBOUND (FOUNDATION IS SUBRECIPIENT)

Prime institutions issue the Agreement and Amendment to the Foundation. Agreements/Amendments are typically routed to Subawards central email. NOTE: If Agreement/Amendment is routed to PI/RA email, please forward to the Subawards central email, subawards@foundation.com, for processing.

- Common Required Docs from Prime:
 - Statement of Work (SOW), Detailed Budget for current period, and Budget Justification

Please refer to the Subaward Manual for more information.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For research administrators seeking to build on their skills and knowledge of research administration here is a compiled list of professional organizations, Certified Research Administration (CRA) courses, and graduate degree and certificate Research Administration programs.

Educational and Professional Development Opportunities in RA

Professional Organizations

- [National Council of University Research Administrators \(NCURA\)](#)
 - [NCURA Region II - Mid-Atlantic Region](#)
 - [NCURA YouTube Tuesdays](#)
- [Society of Research Administrators International \(SRA\)](#):
 - [SRA Northeast Section](#)
- [National Organization of Research Development Professionals \(NORDP\)](#)
- [International Network of Research Management Societies \(INORMS\)](#)
- [New York City Research Administrators Network \(nycrann\)](#)

Certified Research Administrator (CRA)

- Administrators interested in earning a Certified Research Administrator (CRA), Certified Pre-Award Research Administrator, or a Certified Financial Research Administrator (CFRA), see the following:
 - [Research Administrators Certification Council](#)

Graduate Programs

- Administrators interested in earning a Master's Degree in Research Administrators:
 - CUNY School of Professional Studies [MS in Research Administration & Compliance](#)
 - Emmanuel College [MS in Management: Research Administration](#)
 - Johns Hopkins University [MS in Research Administration](#)
 - Rush University [Master of Science in Research Administration \(MSRA\)](#)
 - University of Central Florida [Master of Research Administration](#)
- Administrators interested in Certificate Programs for Research Administration:
 - University of Central Florida [Research Administration Certificate](#)
 - University of Maryland Graduate School [Research Administration Certificate](#)
- Administrators interested in earning a Master's Degree or a Certificate in Clinical Research Administration:
 - [Arizona State University](#)
 - Campbell University [Master of Science in Clinical Research](#)
 - Drexel University [MS in Clinical Research Organization and Management](#)
 - [The George Washington University](#)
 - Wake Forest University [Master's in Clinical Research Management](#)

Appendix 3. Johns Hopkins University Institutional Review Board Approval



Homewood Institutional Review Board

3400 N. Charles Street
Wyman Park Building, Suite N408
Baltimore MD 21218-2685
410-516-6580
<http://homewoodirb.jhu.edu/>

Michael McCloskey, PhD
IRB Chair

Date: February 3, 2021

PI Name: Marianne Woods

Study #: HIRB00012146

Study Name: Development of a Website Resource Toolkit to Support the Onboarding and Continued Professional Growth of Research Administrators at a Not-for-profit Foundation

Date of Review: 2/2/2021

Date of Acknowledgement: 2/2/2021

Expiration Date: 2/1/2022

The above referenced study has been *acknowledged*.

Review Type:	Exempt
Funding Agency:	Not funded
Grant or Contract Number:	
International Sites:	No
Maximum number of participants:	50
Vulnerable populations:	None
Consent process:	
Assent Process:	

The Board determined that this research meets the criteria for submission of a Progress Report. The Progress Report must be submitted at least 6 weeks prior to the expiration date shown above on this notice. If the Progress Report is not submitted prior to the expiration date all ongoing research activities must stop immediately, including data analysis. Before any research activity can resume, you must submit the Progress Report.

No changes may be made to the protocol or the consent form without the approval of the Board.

Please keep in mind that it is your responsibility to inform the HIRB of any adverse consequences to participants that occur in the course of the study, as well as any complaints from participants regarding the research. In conducting this research, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the *HIRB Policies and Procedures Manual*.

Approved Documents:

Recruiting Materials:

Questionnaire Recruitment Email

Study Team Members:

Dana-Marie Gomes

APPROVAL IS GRANTED UNDER THE TERMS OF FWA00005834 FEDERAL-WIDE ASSURANCE OF COMPLIANCE WITH DHHS REGULATIONS FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Appendix 4. Short Bio

Dana-Marie Gomes received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Connecticut. She is a Grants Pre-Award Administration in the Office of Sponsored Projects for a not-for-profit Foundation based in New York City. She has been at the Foundation for five years and held the previous roles of Operations Clerk and Subawards Administrator, before her promotion to her current role. The Foundation was her first exposure to the world of research administration. Her curiosity to learn more about research administration led to her enrollment in the Johns Hopkins Master of Science in Research Administration program.